

W A N T E D—

A CIVIC STATESMAN.

A New Plank for An Old Party.

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—BY—

A DEMOCRAT.

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1897.

## APOLOGIA.

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Certain politicians in a certain National party in certain localities are again trying the old, old game of prostituting a national principle to the base uses of local spoils. They have no eye for the future of the party, no ear for any sound but that of the dinner bell. Their personal success means their party's failure.

This pamphlet is an effort to raise a note of warning and to offer a suggestion as to the right path for the party to tread in local affairs, if it would obtain confidence in national matters. It is a public, rather than a private appeal, so as to prevent the politicians from suppressing it "for the good of the party" (meaning themselves), and to compel them, if possible, to state publicly their reasons should they decline to adopt it. It is an impersonal appeal, so that the plank herein suggested (at page 8) may be treated as its merits or demerits deserve, without regard to its author. He withholds his name, not from fear of the consequences to him, but to it. Much of the power of the press is due to the impersonality of its editorials. When we know a writer's name we are too apt to prejudice his production, favorably if he is of our general way of thinking, adversely if he is not; and if we have never heard of him we are prone to inquire, who is the fellow who intrudes his views. Suffice it that the author submits his proposed plank to the thoughtful consideration of earnest-minded men on its merits, in the hope that it will provoke discussion. If any one is curious to ask, who is this that dares to trouble Israel, he answers, in words which should be rescued from the ignoble possession of an ignoble man,

I am

A DEMOCRAT.

## WANTED—A CIVIC STATESMAN.

The need, the opportunity, the means, those three things, whose co-existence is so necessary to enable great statesmen to carry out great plans, are here. Where is the statesman?

The need is here.

One of the results of our political system is the failure of municipal government all over the land. Everywhere the cause is the same. Our cities are recklessly, extravagantly, dishonestly governed by a never-ending horde of ever-changing henchmen, who form the regular army in politics, and who look down with supreme disdain upon any citizen who wishes to act as a volunteer in the cause which all profess to have at heart, the welfare of the people. It has come to such a pass that no citizen has any rights which the spoilsman is bound to respect. If we, who have the votes and the power to turn out these men and to keep them out, could we only find the way to exercise it, if we venture to express our opinion, we are told that we do not know what we are talking about. If we organize for mutual protection against official thieves, we are sneered at as being amateurs. If we take any political action except march to the polls and vote our party's ticket, we are looked upon as impertinent interlopers. It is sneeringly suggested that we know nothing about "practical politics," and that we must leave everything to the "practical politician."

What is a practical politician? He is the same to-day that he has ever been. He is best defined in the burning words of John Milton.

"This is the masterpiece of a modern politician, how to qualify and mould the sufferance and subjection of the people to the length of that foot that is to tread on their necks; how rapine may serve itself with the fair and honorable pretences of public good; how the puny law may be brought under the wardship and control of lust and will; in which attempt, if they fall short, then must a superficial colour of reputation by all means, direct or indirect, be gotten to wash over the unsightly bruise of honour."

Such are the men who are in command, generally speaking, of our municipal governments. They may not be so ostensibly, but none the less are they really in control. Not always, for once in a while the people, raised to a frenzy of indignation, sweep them out of power,—only to see them return when the fever is over.

We have an abundance of patriotism. Our love of country is intense. It is love of the vicinage, of our cities, towns and villages, where we make our homes, which seems to be a plant of sickly growth. If a word may be coined, we lack "civicism." This dearth of civicism has been owing mainly to our political system, whereby the national party organizations have come to regard as legitimate objects of desire the local as well as the national offices. It is not necessary to go into argument to prove what is so generally known, even if it be not generally admitted. The national parties are trespassers on the municipal domain. The great need of the hour is to eject them as trespassers, and for a civic statesman who has the brains to devise and the nerve to execute a writ of ejectment.

The opportunity is here.

It lies in this, that men's minds have been opened to the needs of the hour, men's hearts have been quickened with a desire to do something, men's hands are ready for the work. All over the land organizations are springing up, full of

zealous, earnest-minded citizens, imbued with the spirit of civicism as well as patriotism. Their methods may be as diverse as possible, their end is the same, the rescue of the locality from the evil hand of the local politician, the henchman of the national politician, the great man's great man. Good Government Clubs, Societies for the Prevention of Crime, City Vigilant Leagues, Associations for the Promotion of Political Knowledge, Reform Associations, Municipal Leagues, Citizens' Associations—varied are their names, single is their purpose. They have not accomplished much. Too often they are defeated. With scythes and axes, with sticks and stones, with inexperienced leaders, divided after inharmonious councils, they hurl themselves against the compact lines of the "regulars," and only win when an invincible spirit sustains a sudden rush. Their successes are usually turned into failures. The men they sometimes succeed in electing not seldom prove inefficient from lack of previous experience, or from the effects of sudden elevation to lofty station. So it often happens that their sublime cause is more injured by victory than by defeat. Undeterred by overwhelming discomfiture or disastrous triumph, these men, animated by divine fire, the moral force of a resolute civicism, are determined not to give up the contest. Being thus inflexible, they are sure to win in the long run, even though the run be very long.

This, then, constitutes the opportunity. A need may exist, but unless men are conscious of it, and desire something to be done to supply it, there is no opportunity. A statesman is a leader, but he must have forces to lead and an object point which they wish to reach. If the desire is wanting in them, he must educate before he can lead them. The fault of most amateurs in politics is, that they are impatient to lead or to be led before the process of education (of themselves as well as of others) is completed. It may safely be claimed that the process of educating a true spirit of civicism is now all but completed in many of our citizens. One branch of that education is certainly over, and about it a word should here be said. It is now generally acknowledged among thinking men that the phrase "loyalty to



party" is a cry of the thief who wishes to divert pursuit, a light of the coast wrecker who seeks to lure the ship on the rocks. The members of both national parties have at last learned the same lesson. In 1884, many Republicans found that they must choose between their party and their country. Their party was divided into three classes, those who believed that it had nominated an honest as well as able candidate, those who believed that he was dishonest but that they should support him for the party's sake and those who believed that he was dishonest and that they should oppose him for their country's sake. The two former voted together. The latter bolted. The candidate was defeated. That revolt led to great consequences. It begot an independent spirit which the politicians have never been able to subdue, and which spread like a fire on the prairie, in all directions. Twelve years rolled by. In the last campaign the Democrats found themselves similarly divided into those who thought that the party's candidate represented sound democratic principles, those who believed that he did not, but should be supported for the party's sake, and those who believed not only that his principles were unsound, but that he should be opposed for the country's best good. The two former voted together. The latter bolted. The candidate was defeated. It was meet that both of the national parties should be disciplined in the same way. Defeat of a party by its own men is bitter but wholesome. The lesson thus taught, that patriotism is above partisanship, is not lost upon the American people. The belief generally obtains, except among office seekers, that civicism must likewise be placed above party. The opportunity, therefore, is here.

Lastly, the means are also here.

It is, indeed, a singular coincidence that there is now in existence an organization which can do the needed work. It is a happy coincidence that its highest interest, personal self-interest, is to do it. The spasmodic bodies above enumerated are not well fitted to execute a writ of ejectment upon the national parties as trespassers in municipal affairs. They are in a chaotic, protoplasmic condition.

True, out of them will be evolved an adequate instrument to effect the needed reform of electing men to municipal offices with regard to their fitness and without regard to their national party affiliations, but that process of evolution may take a long time. Strange to say, there is just now a national party organization which could accomplish the desired end much sooner than mere local organizations, and whose highest interest, it chances to be, lies in the direction named. It is obvious that it would be easier for a *national* than for any other party to eject the national trespassers from the municipal territory. All it needs to do is to pass a self-denying ordinance. The others would in time be forced to follow its example. *For the first time in years we now have a party organization whose very name, as well as purpose, is national.* It is the offspring of a national emergency. Its platform breathes nothing but aspirations in regard to national issues. It is a suitor for national favor. Its selfish interest is to be regardless of self. Its name is the National Democratic Party. While it may not by legally authenticated commission represent the Democracy of this country, no one can deny that it does so in fact. If a nation's man of war is taken possession of by pirates who succeed in compelling some of the crew to help sail her, and if those who will not submit get another craft and sail her under their country's flag, no sane man will assert that this last is not their country's ship rather than the other. So it is with the Democratic Party. The National Democrats may have had to get another ship, but they are Democrats sailing under the Democratic flag. Their former vessel is in possession of pirates, who have stained its flag black and flaunt it as a piratical rag. The National Democratic Party is the Democratic Party, none else. It has a great fight on hand against the pirate ship, a fight for principle, a fight to the death. The pirates must be exterminated, and its brethren in their crew rescued. With its national name, its national principles, it will win, if it keeps to national purposes. Let it be what it professes to be, a national party, and let it undertake as one of its aims the driving out of national parties from the

municipal domain all over this country. This is not merely local, but truly national work. The National Democracy is now in various parts of the country laying down the lines of its local organizations.

Suppose it were to adopt the following plank :

We believe in the abstention of national parties from municipal politics, and we will not mingle in municipal contests any further than to aid as best we may in the selection of municipal candidates with regard to fitness and without regard to their national party affiliations.

If it be asked, how will the adoption of such a plank by one party compel others to adopt it, the answer is, by the force of good example aided by popular favor. Along this line, some national organization, sooner or later will surely travel, either voluntarily or by compulsion. Let our party blaze the way, and reap the first fruits of virgin soil.

There will, of course, be a chorus of objections from all local politicians, who propose to use the National Democratic Party for the purpose of securing municipal spoils. Space will only permit of mentioning two or three of such objections.

They will say, not always perhaps for publication, but in private conversation, that they will not be able to keep the national organization alive in their local districts unless they can get into it the local party workers, and they cannot get them in or keep them in without holding out the hope of looting the civic offices. To which the reply may be made: (1) Perhaps *they* cannot, but that is not saying that a statesmen cannot succeed where a politician would fail; (2) their way is sure to fail.

Look at what has happened in the City of New York under the leadership of "practical politicians." These shrewd tacticians, as they love to call themselves, have already twice tried to build up in that city an organization on the time-honored (or rather dishonored) plan, and have twice met with humiliating defeat—mirth-provoking defeat.



The New York County Democracy, the New York State Democracy, where, oh, where, are they? Hark from the tombs a doleful sound. 'Tis music in the ears of many citizens. The shades of defunct practical politicians are heard to wail: *Reform of spoilsmen by spoilsmen for spoilsmen is impractical.* Will practical politicians learn nothing from continued failure? Is it proposed to build up the National Democracy on the same old foundation which slipped from under the County Democracy, and, again, from under the State Democracy? A curious climax of names this, County, State, National. Are they all to stand for local plunder for party workers? Are we to see the disgusting farce, the Hand of Esau and Voice of Jacob, played over again? Let us hope not. If the National Democracy in the State of New York is once found treading in the same old paths, under the same old leaders, its doom is sealed. The National Democracy in New York needs statesmen—not practical politicians. In other States its need is the same.

Again, some practical politician will say it will never do for us to adopt such a plank, for it would be publicly advertising that we are ready for a deal. So it would if adopted by "practical politicians." They are so used to "dealing" that the people have grown used to expecting them to deal. They will be suspected no matter what plank they adopt. It is their trade. It is not suggested that *they* put such a thing as this into action.

It is a pure assumption that a national party organization cannot be kept up except by the aid of local party workers animated by hope of local spoils. The experiment has not yet been tried. If those leeches can be driven out of politics, the men who now have the responsibility of leadership would be saved a vast amount of drudgery, to say the least. Without civil service reform it may be admitted that this would be impossible, but with it entrenched in law and honestly administered, a party worker, in the sense the word is now used, is no longer a *sine qua non* to the continued existence of a party organization. How much better to replace him by a man who joins the organization for the

sake of its principles rather than its spoils. Filled with such men it is better fitted to achieve lasting victory than when choked with men whose only purpose in joining it is to get office or wealth or influence. A trained volunteer soldier is better than a regular army soldier, for he has, in addition, brains and love of right. England's Hessians failed to put down the rebellion of 1776, but America's volunteers suppressed the far more formidable rebellion of 1861. It is not, however, intended to make here a labored argument in support of the suggested plank. It is submitted that its adoption by the National Democratic Party would cause that party at once to be taken into popular confidence. And, after all, it would not be such a terrific act of self-denial—certainly not in New York City. There is no hope of its carrying the local contests for many years to come. The only thing that can result, if it tries to build itself up upon the old, old lines, will be that it will get through “deals” a few offices for its leaders and nothing else. “That which is to be hath already been.”

It is not for a moment thought that this proposition will meet with the approbation of mere politicians. It is put forth in the hope that it will fall under the eye of some man of statesmanlike proportions.

There is now going on a conflict between politicians, who are struggling to keep the bandages on the eyes of the people whom they have so long hoodwinked, and those citizens, who having torn off the bandages from their own eyes and found that the cry, “Never vote against your party,” is the devil's cry, have determined to tear the bandages off the eyes of the rest of their fellow-citizens. Examples showing how the practical politician usually leads his party into dishonored retirement are powerful aids in such a struggle. Here is one. For years a shifty, scheming, tricky jackdaw strutted up and down the Empire State, in peacock's feathers, crying aloud at all times, in all places, “I am a Democrat.” He deceived many and attained high position. In State campaigns he has shown that in his lexicon, democrat and trickster are synonymous. In the last

national campaign the supreme moment came when he was given the final chance to make good his claim to be a Democrat. He stood silent. No one knows how he voted except himself, and he dare not tell. Perhaps his vote was blank. Who knows? He now stands alone upon the edge of his political grave, but no one thinks him of enough importance to shove him in, and there he will stand, deserted and weary, until he rolls over into it, unhonored, unsung.

Another man has climbed to power in another party in the same State by devious ways, means which no honorable man would consent to take. He is nothing more nor less than a broker in legislation, who demands money from those who want acts of, and bestows it upon those who want seats in, the Legislature. He is not a broker in bribery in the strict legal sense, perhaps, but he is just that in the moral sense. He now appears to be at his zenith, but he, too, will soon learn that methods such as his are most dangerous when most successful. His end is not far off. It would be near, if the men of honor in his party had the courage to fight him, when it is against, as well as when it is for, their interest.\* We are all exceedingly brave in denouncing wickedness in high places, when the high places are in possession of our political opponents. When they belong to our political friends, we keep quiet, for the "good of the party," for "harmony's sake"—especially if we personally are after an office. Out upon such hypocrisy! It is a stench in the nostrils of the plain people of this land.

In the midst of the conjunctions and oppositions of men, politicians of this sort sooner or later meet the fate so graphically depicted by the poet:

"I myself have seen the ungodly in great power and flourishing like a green bay tree. I went by and lo, he was gone. I sought him, but his place could nowhere be found."

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\* As this is going through the press, the news comes that one leader in that party, finding that it has condoned this man's rascality, has taken the only course open to men of self-respect. Will there be no more?

The reason is that such men do not "take heed unto the thing that is right." Are there many political leaders who, when urged to an unrighteous course, put their refusal on the ground that it is unrighteous? Yet, when such leaders do arise, the people rally to their support.

On the sworn twelve  
There may be a thief or two far guiltier  
Than him they try.

The verdict of the sworn twelve is, however, generally in accord with its notion of justice. The sworn twelve are a fair sample of the unsworn multitude. The people will in the end follow manly, courageous, honest leaders. The responsibility for party wrongdoing rests upon leaders who wink at fraud. No national party which seeks to build itself up by attracting party workers through local spoils can remain honest. The more it breathes honesty in the platform, and practices dishonesty in the primary, the greater is its hypocrisy, the more terrible its fall. This is the true explanation of the "tidal waves" which have swept over the land of late years, first one way then another. It is not that the people want to vote the outs in, but that they seek to put the ins out.

In civic affairs everywhere the need, the opportunity, the means are at last in conjunction, and only the politicians in opposition.

Said Burke:

"The Eastern politicians never do anything without the opinion of the astrologers on the fortunate moment. \* \* \* Statesmen of a more judicious prescience look for the fortunate moment, too; but they seek it not in the conjunctions and oppositions of planets, but in the conjunctions and oppositions of men and things."

The civic statesman, who has this prescience, and who is able to place civicism on the lofty plane of patriotism, above that of partisanship, will earn undying fame as well as loving gratitude. He may be hard to find, but he will appear.

This country has never yet failed for want of a great leader in a great crisis. She will not fail now. He must be a man of national reputation to command influence, an orator to win support, of experience in practical politics so as not to make mistakes, of an independent turn of mind so as to stand firm against the threats of practical politicians, of a genial personality so as not to give offence by an air of superior holiness. Such a man working from a national vantage ground to save our municipalities from the curse of the local politician, would advance the interests of his national party, and be of more use to his country than will be possible in any other way for years to come.

Therefore let us raise the cry, and sound it far and wide :  
Wanted—a Civic Statesman !







